

CBS EVENING NEWS
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CPO3>SPACE SHUTTLE>RATHER: Because of the icy cold in Florida, today's first-ever, purely military mission of the space shuttle was ordered rescheduled for tomorrow instead. But while the worst of the freeze appears to be over, the controversy over the launch of the first shuttle mission subjected to secrecy and censorship is not. Pentagon correspondent David Martin reports.

MARTIN: There the space shuttle Discovery stands, forced by unexpected icing to delay its launch 24 hours. Discovery is doing exactly what the Pentagon has warned would happen if military missions were left to a civilian agency like NASA: falling behind schedule and doing it in full view of news cameras. As far as the Pentagon is concerned, far too much is already known. When Discovery finally reaches orbit, it will perform a maneuver much like this earlier mission when the shuttle carried a communication satellite into space. Only this time, it will be a new generation spy satellite designed to eavesdrop on the Soviet Union. Once on station, the satellite will unfurl its antennas, one for sucking up communications from the Soviet Union, another for sending the intercepted signals down to a ground station in Australia. From there, the signals will be retransmitted by a second satellite to the National Security Agency outside Washington. State of the art computers in the basement of the agency's headquarters will sort through the massive data, searching for Russian secrets.

JOHN PIKE (Federation of American Scientists): A telemetry from Soviet missile tests, emissions from military units, so that we can locate where they are and what they're doing.

MARTIN: Why, you might ask, is so much known about a mission that's supposed to be so secret? The answer is that someone who knows what he's looking for can piece together a lot just from publicly available information. One piece of the puzzle: the U.S. is expanding this top secret satellite ground station in Australia, evidence that a new kind of satellite is about to be launched. For all the controversy over the secrecy of this launch, the Russians do not seem very curious. A Soviet surveillance trawler, which loiters offshore for most shuttle launches, is nowhere to be seen. David Martin, CBS News, at the Kennedy Space Center. <